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Advancement of women

Situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Note of the Secretary-General*

1. The present note on the critical situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) is submitted in accordance with rule 112 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

2. The Secretary-General wishes to express his appreciation to the members of the Working Group on the future operations of INSTRAW for their efforts to find a solution to the financial and institutional crisis that has impeded the proper functioning of the Institute during the last decade.

3. It will be recalled that Member States had mandated in both the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 and in agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council, that all parts of the United Nations system should have a gender perspective in their respective areas in order to carry out gender analysis and apply the strategy of gender mainstreaming. The extent of the implementation of these mandates has been monitored by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council during their respective annual reviews in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action.

4. In her capacity as the chair of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has regularly advocated for the need to collaborate with INSTRAW, based on the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women for 2002-2006 (E/2001/27-E/CN.6/2001/14 and Corr.1) and the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women 2002-2005 (E/CN.6/2001/4). She has also urged action by the donor community to assist in making the Institute financially viable. In recent years, within the framework of the system-wide medium-term plan, coordinating future plans of United Nations entities in gender-

* The present document was submitted following the conclusion of the deliberations of the Working Group on the future operations of INSTRAW on 12 August 2002.

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related areas, several United Nations agencies and entities, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations University as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have endeavoured to develop collaborative projects with INSTRAW. For example, INSTRAW could not pursue the UNICEF proposal to finance a gender training database owing to resource and staffing constraints.

5. In spite of the efforts within the United Nations system, the decisions of intergovernmental bodies and support from some Member States, INSTRAW has continued to suffer from a chronic shortage of resources that has prevented it from producing the desired level of output. The Institute is, therefore, unable to forecast long-term plans or to make commitments to cooperate with other United Nations entities and national partners.

6. Voluntary contributions for 2002, as at 31 August 2002, amounted to $23,496. Together with the balance from the previous one-time advance by the General Assembly, the anticipated total available resources for 2003 would be less than $100,000. Although members of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW had expressed their intention to raise funds for the Institute, no funds have been forthcoming.

7. It is not possible, at this stage, to provide reliable estimates of INSTRAW's financial requirements for 2003. However, on the basis of the resource requirements contained in the statements on the programme budget implications of General Assembly resolution 55/219 (A/C.3/55/L.33 and A/C.5/55/26) and in the report of the Secretary-General on the critical situation of INSTRAW (A/56/279), it is estimated that approximately $1,400,000 per year would be needed to fund the Institute's activities at the minimum level.

8. The Working Group has recommended in its report that $500,000 be allocated from the regular budget of the United Nations to finance the core activities of the Institute. As indicated in a note submitted by the Secretariat to the Working Group, the amount of $500,000 would be sufficient to cover only the salaries and common staff costs of the four current Professional posts (1 D-2, 1 P-4, 1 P-3 and 1 P-2/1) for one year, with no funds remaining to cover supporting operating expenses. In particular, without significant additional voluntary contributions, the Institute would not have resources to provide for the development/reorientation of the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS) or for its research and training activities. The Working Group has also proposed the establishment of a post of a Deputy Director, at the D-1 level, with specific fund-raising responsibilities, for which the necessary additional resources would have to be made available. The creation of such a post in and of itself may not resolve the Institute's financial problems unless donors are willing to contribute additional funds.

9. The steady decline in voluntary contributions and the uncertainty surrounding the future operation of INSTRAW are the key factors behind the difficulties faced in attracting a Director of suitable calibre. In order to ensure that a senior person would be in charge of INSTRAW, an interim manager/director was recruited through the Executive Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the concurrence of the Department of Management, the Office of Legal Affairs and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and approved by the Secretary-

General, in accordance with the staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and the existing statute of INSTRAW.

10. Within the limits of its serious resource constraints, the Institute continues to carry out its modest work programme described in the note of the Secretary-General (A/57/129-E/2002/77, paras. 2-4). Should the required resources be available, the Institute's work programme for the next biennium could address critical gender issues within four strategic areas: (a) partnership with men in reproductive health of women; (b) gender and new information and communication technologies; (c) gender aspects of conflict and conflict prevention; and (d) enhancing women's participation in development, focusing on the areas of education, work and decision-making. INSTRAW has also been able to develop the basic structure for a "one-stop" web site, with interactive features supporting core services such as research, networking, capacity-building and advocacy through the use of GAINS. However, owing to the pioneering nature of the project, the lack of technical expertise, resources and the limited time frame in which it has had to complete this system, more work is required to provide for further development and reorientation of GAINS. In this connection, the Institute plans to contract suitably qualified expertise to review and refocus GAINS in accordance with the recommendation made by OIOS in its report on the audit of INSTRAW (A/56/907).

11. In his capacity as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, and having been requested to report to legislative bodies, the Secretary-General designated a Special Representative for INSTRAW. The Special Representative normally attends the meetings of the Board of Trustees, arranges panels to recommend a Director for the appointment by the Secretary-General and facilitates actions by the Office of the Controller and the Office of Human Resources Management in support of INSTRAW.

12. In light of the steady downturn of INSTRAW, the General Assembly, in resolution 54/140 of 17 December 1999, requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide support to the Institute, in particular by setting up a new structure and working method for the Institute and by encouraging voluntary contributions. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1999/54 of 29 July 1999, requested the Secretary-General to draw up, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, a new structure and working method, and, in its resolution 2000/24 of 28 July 2000, urged the Secretary-General to invite Member States to contribute to the United Nations Trust Fund for INSTRAW.

13. In fulfilment of those mandates, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, who is also the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for INSTRAW, was increasingly involved in the selection of the Director as well as in fund-raising and representational activities on behalf of INSTRAW. As a result of the OIOS audit of INSTRAW (A/56/907), which identified a number of managerial problems at the Institute, the Special Representative has provided continuous support and guidance.

14. Over the years, various options for the institutional linkage of INSTRAW with other United Nations bodies have been discussed, but no satisfactory solution had been agreed upon. Having considered the options of a merger with UNIFEM or with the United Nations University, the Working Group has recommended its linkage to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, under the direct authority of the Under-Secretary-General. Should the General Assembly approve the recommendation of the

Working Group, special attention should be given to elaborating the modalities implied in the terms "liaison" and "linkage" with the Department. The roles, liabilities and responsibilities of both entities, as well as the question of resource implications resulting from such a linkage, should be clarified. Consideration should be given to the changes that would be required to the revised statute of the Institute, and to clarifying the role of the Director and the proposed advisory board.

15. If it is revitalized in an effective way and provided with the financial and human resources commensurate with its mandate, INSTRAW could potentially make a valuable and substantive contribution to the advancement of women within the United Nations system. It is critical, therefore, that the Institute be assured of both institutional and financial stability.